

ORAL NARRATIVES FROM BANG SMAD: DEITIES, DEMONS,  
*BLA MA*, AND LEADERS

COLLECTED AND TRANSLATED BY  
BKRA SHIS BZANG PO (Independent Scholar)

ABSTRACT

20 oral narratives from Bang smad Village, Nyag rong County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province are presented. Topics include historical figures, demons, *bla ma*, and deities.

KEYWORDS

Bang smad, Folktales, Mgon po rnam rgyal, Nyag rong

## INTRODUCTION

Bkra shis bzang po collected these folktales from four elders in Bang smad Village, Nyag rong County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The narratives cover a variety of topics including *bla ma*, local mountain deities, and historical figures such as nineteenth century Nyag rong king, Mgon po rnam rgyal.

## CONSULTANTS

Dbal bzang (b. 1937) was the government-appointed village leader of Bang smad<sup>1</sup> in 1981. In 2001 he became ill, his left hand and foot were paralyzed, and he was bedridden for eight months. Since that time he has been unable to walk and must be carried up and down stairs, and to the toilet. During the daytime he is carried out to a small wooden room that is adjacent to his family home.

Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (b. 1945) is a *bla ma* at Mtsho kha Monastery. In 1953 he began studying Tibetan with his uncle. Several years later, he studied traditional Tibetan medicine with monastic doctors.

Tshe dbang (b. 1940) served as the government village leader in Bang smad Village for three years and worked as an accountant in the local township office for five years. He reads and writes Tibetan.

A lca (b. 1949-2011) was born in a Ri sne Village family that has had several incarnation *bla ma*. He was a renowned orator and was frequently invited by other villages on occasions when speeches were required. When I recorded him in 2009, he provided three different speeches in Nyag skad,<sup>2</sup> and six folktales in Mi nyag, including the stories of Mgon po rnam rgyal related below. In 2010, I made more

---

<sup>1</sup> Bang smad Township, Nyag rong County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China. See Bkra shis bzang po (2012) for more on Bang smad. See Yudru Tsomo (2006) for more on Nyag rong.

<sup>2</sup> The Khams dialect spoken in Nyag rong is referred to locally as Nyag skad.

recordings of dance and folk songs and put them on-line here:

- <http://www.oralliterature.org/collections/bkrashis001.html>  
<http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/browse?type=author&value=Bkra+shis+bzang+po>

## MOUNTAIN DEITIES

### 1. Making Storms<sup>3</sup>

When mountain deities need to repay grain to other mountain deities, they may send storms to destroy villagers' crops before harvest, and then use deer and other wild animals to collect the grain. Locals ask *bla ma* to chant scriptures to prevent such destructive storms. *Bla ma* chant over and blow on grain that they then scatter into the sky. This grain is considered empowered by the *bla ma's* breath and chanting.

If people see hair atop mountains after large storms, they believe they are deer hair, indicating that the *bla ma's* grains injured wild animals. People also find grains in the wounds of deer.

### 2. Kha ba lung ring<sup>4</sup>

Kha ba lung ring Mountain is approximately three kilometers northwest of Dkar mdzes County Town. A wealthy family once lived near there and stored much grain. Meanwhile, the deity, Kha ba lung ring needed to return grain he had borrowed from other mountain deities, but he had nothing with which to repay them. He appeared to the wealthy family and asked them to lend him some grain. He assured them he would return it as soon as he could, and the family agreed. Kha ba lung ring told them he would come that night to

---

<sup>3</sup> Dbal bzang.

<sup>4</sup> Dbal bzang.

transport the grain. "Please leave your grain box open. When I collect the grain there will be many odd sounds, but don't be afraid and don't say anything," he said.

Kha ba lung ring came to transport the grain in the middle of the night. The family heard many horses and other strange sounds, but said nothing, and the next day the family saw that their granary was empty.

Several years later, a storm destroyed all the villagers' crops. The next day, Kha ba lung ring visited the family that had helped him and said, "Now I will return your grain. Please open your granary so I can return your grain tonight. You will hear many strange sounds, but don't say anything." In the middle of the night, they heard many strange sounds and said nothing.

The next morning, the father sent the daughter to look in the grain box. When she looked at the box, she saw that it was overflowing. She also saw a golden flower atop the grain. She excitedly reached out and touched the golden flower, which then fell on the floor and shattered. That golden flower was a magical gift from Kha ba lung ring and, had she not shattered the golden flower, the family would have become even richer than before.

The daughter went missing that afternoon. The family searched for her for many days, but could not find her. Kha ba lung ring had kidnapped her as punishment for shattering the golden flower. He asked her to milk his wild animals everyday, which kept her constantly busy. Kha ba lung ring also told her to divide the food villagers offered him.<sup>5</sup> They ate the best food themselves, the mid-quality food was put on his table and offered to other deities, and the worst food was put under the table and offered to ghosts and *yi dwags* 'hungry ghosts'. She often saw many mountains deities coming to Kha ba lung ring's home when people made *bsang*.<sup>6</sup>

She stayed with Kha ba lung ring for thirteen years and, during that time, her mother constantly worried about her. Kha ba lung ring often saw the mother fretting. She nearly died from stress

---

<sup>5</sup> It is believed that mountain deities consume food that is burned as offerings to them.

<sup>6</sup> Incense offerings.

and worry. The girl's father frequently made offerings to Kha ba lung ring and asked him to help find his daughter.

One day, Kha ba lung ring gave three pieces of gold to the daughter - one for herself, one for her mother, and one for her father - and then sent her home. Her parents were overjoyed, her mother's health improved, and her parents used the gold to make themselves happy. The daughter told all the villagers to offer the best things they could to Kha ba lung ring. She later married a man from a very rich family and had a joyful life.

### 3. G.yung drung spun dgu<sup>7</sup>

G.yung drung spun dgu is a nine-peaked mountain north of Bang smad Village. Local residents consider the peaks to be nine brothers. The *bsang* scripture for G.yung drung spun dgu states that the mountains evolved from *btsan*<sup>8</sup> spirits. The nine brothers ride different wild animals, hold different weapons, and wear distinct armor. Next to G.yung drung spun dgu Mountain is Sman btsun le'u sman, G.yung drung spun dgu's wife. Sman btsun le'u sman Mountain is located southeast of Bang smad Village.

Sman btsun le'u sman is G.yar ri seng ge Mountain's sister, who eloped with G.yung drung spun dgu. When it was night, G.yar ri seng ge sent all his warriors to look for his sister. Sunrise came while they were searching for Sman btsun le'u sman, which turned all the warriors to trees. This explains the tall trees at the foot of Sman btsun le'u sman Mountain. After G.yung drung spun dgu and Sman btsun le'u sman married, G.yar ri seng ge gave some *be lo*<sup>9</sup> trees as a trousseau to Sman btsun le'u sman. *Be lo* trees now grow among pines on the slopes of Sman btsun le'u sman Mountain.

---

<sup>7</sup> Rdo rje rgyal mtshan.

<sup>8</sup> *Btsan* are spirit beings who follow their leader, *Btsan rgod* 'bar ba nag po, and have their own *btsan lam* 'btsan path'. Building a house on a *btsan lam* or otherwise blocking or disturbing it results in *btsan* retaliating by harming people with their *btsan mda* 'btsan arrow'.

<sup>9</sup> *Be lo* are small white-timbered evergreen trees with hard wood that is often used to make handles for tools such as axes and mattocks.

#### 4. A Sacred Stone<sup>10</sup>

A large stone in Bang smad Valley is considered to be G.yung drung spun dgu's horse. Beside it is a small stone shaped like butter sewn in a skin, which villagers call Lhu rdzung da bi in Mi nyag. Atop that small stone is a gap that looks as if a piece of butter had been cut out. Villagers believe that G.yung drung spun dgu cut out that piece of butter to offer it in *bsang*. Locals also believe that rocking that stone and repeating its name prevents them from losing their livestock, thus villagers do this whenever they pass by.

When Nor bu bzang po was a child, he played near Lhu rdzung da bi and accidentally broke a small piece off it. He married years later. One day, his wife went to that valley to collect wood. While returning to the village, she stumbled in front of Lhu rdzung da bi and hurt her leg. By the time she got home, her wound had already become infected. As each day passed, she became more ill. Her husband asked many *bla ma*, who explained that it was because of his actions when he was young. Nor bu bzang po then made many offerings to Lhu rdzung da bi but to no avail. His wife died.

#### *BLA MA*

##### 1. Small Shrines<sup>11</sup>

Long ago, a high-ranking Bon<sup>12</sup> *bla ma* named Dar ri sbyin pa rgyal mthshan lived at a hermitage in Pur pa'i Village for many years. Before passing away, he announced that he wanted all his body parts to be dispersed after his death in order to benefit everyone in Nyag rong. Consequently, all his body parts were spread by an eagle after he died.

Most villages in Nyag rong County have a small shrine full of

---

<sup>10</sup> Rdo rje rgyal mtshan.

<sup>11</sup> Rdo rje rgyal mtshan.

<sup>12</sup> Bon, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.

*tshwa tshwa*<sup>13</sup> and *ma Ni* stones, and believe that each small room contains a part of Dar ri sbyin pa rgyal mthsan's body. Villagers believe that some of Dar ri sbyin pa rgyal mthsan's hair is in Bang smad Village's shrine, which they call A ku me, because villagers chant the Bon mantra, *A ku me du tri su nag po zhi zhi mal mal swa ha* as they circumambulate. Stong ra Villagers<sup>14</sup> believe one of Dar ri sbyin pa rgyal mthsan's finger bones is in their shrine. In certain Nyag rong locations, villagers circumambulate a tree instead of a shrine, believing that the body part is buried under the tree.

When suffering from toothaches, lumbago, or headaches, people believe that circumambulating the relic and chanting "*A ku me du tri su nag po zhi zhi mal mal swa ha*," will cure them. Villagers believe a spirit owner for each small shrine herds sheep during the day, and only inhabits the shrine at night. Therefore, villagers only circumambulate such shrines at night. They go to bed after circumambulating, believing that their sickness will be cured when they wake.

### *BTSAN*

Locals believe that *btsan* originate when people are murdered or die in anger. Murder victims may eat black and white stones or earth before they die, and then their spirit becomes a *btsan* that may take revenge on their killer. Villagers believe that *btsan* have fixed paths called *btsan lam* '*btsan* ways', have *btsan mda* '*btsan* arrows', and ride swift *btsan rta dmar po* '*red btsan* horses'.

*Btsan* shoot arrows at those who build houses on or block their *btsan lam*. This inflicts disease on people and livestock. Care is taken with children when crossing mountain passes because it is believed that they may easily meet and be harmed by *btsan* in such places. If livestock suddenly collapse, this is believed to have been caused by *btsan*. Villagers then burn incense and fumigate the

---

<sup>13</sup> *Tshwa tshwa* are made from stamped clay and depict, scriptural texts, or images of the Buddha, and also often contain ashes of a cremated corpse.

<sup>14</sup> Stong ra Village is located in Bang smad Township.

livestock with the incense, believing this will release them from the *btsan*'s curse.

### 1. A *Btsan* Tale I<sup>15</sup>

Two ferrymen were beside the Nyag chu River one day. Not many people were crossing the river, so the two boatmen retired for the day and made noodles for supper. Suddenly, they heard people calling from the other side of the river to send a boat for them. One boatman took a boat to the other side of the river, while the other continued cooking noodles.

When that boatman reached the other side of the river, a *btsan* asked him to mount his horses behind him. The boatman did not realize who he was and so mounted the horse. He blinked, and when he opened his eyes, he found himself in a very strange place. He saw a sick old woman inside a room. Little did the boatman know that the *btsan* wanted to take that woman's life. However, a *bla ma* sat by and protected her. The *btsan* went over to the sick woman, but returned empty-handed, and said to the boatman, "There is a very large venomous snake in front of that *bla ma*. I can't go near."

The *btsan* asked the boatman to take a look. The boatman went over and saw only a string of prayer beads in front of the *bla ma*. The *bla ma* said, "Where are you going? Why did you come here?"

The boatman told everything to the *bla ma*, who replied, "He's a *btsan*. You are very far from Nyag rong. You should return to your place with him, otherwise you'll not be able to return home in this life. I will help you. Secretly take my prayer beads with you. When you reach your home place, put them on the *btsan*'s head and he will vanish. But be careful! His horse may sense my prayer beads and refuse to let you ride him." The *bla ma* then gave his prayer beads to the boatman.

The boatman returned and said to the *btsan*, "Yes, there is a very dangerous snake in front of the *bla ma*. We should leave now."

---

<sup>15</sup> Rdo rje rgyal mtshan



As they tried to leave, however, the *btsan's* horse sensed the prayer beads and refused to let the boatman mount. Eventually, however, the boatman got on the horse. He blinked and when he reached the Nyag chu River, he secretly put the prayer beads on the *btsan's* head. The *btsan* vanished with a loud sound. Later, no *btsan* disturbed him.

Villagers believe *btsan* can also help and protect them, and they make offerings to *btsan* before building a new house or when someone falls seriously ill. The ritual for making offerings to *btsan* is called *btsan mchod* 'btsan offering'. Roasted barley is offered to *btsan* during this ritual. This is considered equivalent to offering thousands of livestock to the *btsan*.

## 2. A *Btsan* Tale II<sup>16</sup>

Long ago, a *btsan* went to ask Rdzogs chen rin po che<sup>17</sup> about undertaking a journey, "A myes chos grags<sup>18</sup> is holding a *btsan mchod* in Chab mdo. Will I receive anything if I go there?"

Rdzogs chen rin po che replied, "You will receive something." Then the *btsan* went to Cha mdo.

When the *btsan* returned, he called to Rdzogs chen rin po che from a distance, "Rdzogs chen rin po che, I got a yak from A myes chos grags."

"Please come here and show me what you got from A myes chos grags," Rdzogs chen rin po che replied. Then the *btsan* opened his hand and showed a piece of roasted barley to Rdzogs chen rin po che.

---

<sup>16</sup> Rdo rje rgyal mtshan

<sup>17</sup> Rdzogs chen rin po che was a famous *bla ma* in Rdzogs chen Monastery who was especially well-known for recognizing reincarnation *bla ma*.

<sup>18</sup> A myes chos grags is an unknown monk.

MGON PO RNAM RGYAL<sup>19</sup>

Born into an ordinary family, Mgon po rnam rgyal's parents<sup>20</sup> were not very powerful, however, he later became very powerful. He summoned all the Nyag rong people to help him build his nine-floored palace in Spang ri Village in the Nyag stod 'Upper Nyag rong' region. Workers who rammed earth walls were forced to use their own butter on the surface of the walls to make them look better. Mgon po rnam rgyal fiercely punished anyone who refused. The walls were about three meters wide.<sup>21</sup> He made all brave local men become his soldiers, and expelled timid men.

1. Mgon po rnam rgyal and Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul<sup>22</sup> I

Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul was a famous *bla ma* in Nyag rong at that time. Mgon po rnam rgyal followed Nyag bla ma bdud 'dul, but did not have complete faith in him. One day, Mgon po rnam rgyal sent a soldier to order Nag bla pad ma bdud 'dul to reach his palace that night, but as the invitation arrived late in the day, it was very challenging for the *bla ma* to arrive at Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace that night if he traveled on foot. Consequently, he went to his mountain deity and asked for a yak, which he rode to Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace.

After the *bla ma* arrived, Mgon po rnam rgyal decided to test him, and said to Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul, "Please show me your power. If you can catch a dragon, I'll follow you."

Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul then caught a dragon, which writhed and roared in his arms.

---

<sup>19</sup> Stories one to six provided by A lca (b. 1949-2011). See Yudru Tsomo (2006) and Tashi Tsering (1985) for more on Mgon po rnam rgyal.

<sup>20</sup> Mgon po rnam rgyal's great grandfather was Ri nan dpal mgon. His son, Mgon po tshe brtan, fathered Nor bu tshe ring, Mgon po rnam rgyal's father.

<sup>21</sup> The usual width of a rammed earth wall is about one meter.

<sup>22</sup> Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul (1816-1872) was born in the Khang tshig Family and a famous *bla ma* in the Nyag rong region. For more see Aguillar (2005), and <http://tinyurl.com/z2kl63v>, accessed 9 August 2011.

Mgon po rnam rgyal was frightened and said, "That's enough, please release it."

## 2. Mgon po rnam rgyal and Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul II

Mgon po rnam rgyal asked Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul to go with him to circumambulate Shang lang brag dkar.<sup>23</sup> On the way Mgon po rnam rgyal said, "If you can climb this boulder, it means you are powerful, and I will respect you."

Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul easily climbed the boulder. This frightened Mgon po rnam rgyal, who said, "That's enough, please come down."

Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul said, "From now on you will go below, and I will go above."

Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul's footprints can still be seen on that boulder.

## 3. Mgon po rnam rgyal's Mistrust of Wealthy Families

Mgon po rnam rgyal swiftly destroyed families that were becoming wealthy or powerful. He had two sons and two daughters. One daughter married into the wealthy Pha rda Family. The family's wealth and power began increasing, and Mgon po rnam rgyal's daughter knew that her father would destroy them if they became too rich. She then went to her father and said, "The Pha rda Family always mistreats me."

Mgon po rnam rgyal said, "That's good to hear. I was planning to destroy that family in seven days." The daughter immediately returned home and told them her father's plan. They fled from the village. Seven days later Mgon po rnam rgyal sent soldiers to destroy the Pha rda Family, but they had already escaped and only their

---

<sup>23</sup> Shang lang brag dkar is a sacred mountain located in Shang lang Township, Nyag rong County. It is one of the three most famous mountains in the Nyag rong region.

house remained.

#### 4. Mgon po rnam rgyal Murders Infants

Mgon po rnam rgyal was said to have fed much milk to infants and thrown them from the ninth floor of his palace onto the ground. The infants burst and he laughed in delight, saying, "How very nice!" He enjoyed watching this very much. People believed that he was the embodiment of a half god and half *bdud* 'demon'.

#### 5. Mgon po rnam rgyal has Conflicts with Monasteries

Mgon po rnam rgyal began having conflicts with certain local monasteries, and destroyed several. Once, when his soldiers destroyed Gyon 'gyon Monastery, a soldier named Gzun 'bam left his hat there. Monks in Gyon 'gyon Monastery cursed it. After he retrieved his hat, Gzun 'bam's family members fell ill and had few descendants. Today, this family goes to Gyon 'gyon Monastery every year to ask forgiveness for their ancestor's actions and thus ensure the family's well being.

#### 6. Mgon po rnam rgyal Fights with his People

Mgon po rnam rgyal began quarreling and fighting with his own people, local monasteries, and even some of his soldiers. A mkhyogs lu'i was his best soldier, but he disliked Mgon po rnam rgyal and wrote a letter to the Tibetan Government in Lha sa that said, "Will you bring that Rdo ring<sup>24</sup> to us or should we come to you and take it?" and put a piece of dog feces in with the letter.

The letter infuriated Tibetan government officials. They consulted their fortuneteller, who recommended that they make a

---

<sup>24</sup> Rdo ring are inscribed steles displaying local rulers' entitlement to a given territory.

Mgon po rnam rgyal image, and ask many people and monks to prostrate to it to diminish Mgon po rnam rgyal's *bsod nams*.<sup>25</sup> Many people and monks prostrated to the statue for six or seven days, and then the fortuneteller said, "You can go now, but take care. If he is wearing '*phrug*,'<sup>26</sup> you won't be able to kill him, but if he is wearing *tsha ru*<sup>27</sup> you will."

The Tibetan Government then sent an army to Spang ri to attack Mgon po rnam rgyal. First, the Tibetan Government and Mgon po rnam rgyal were to have a discussion. Mgon po rnam rgyal's oldest son asked, "Father, what should I wear?"

Mgon po rnam rgyal answered, "You should wear your best clothes in front of the Tibetan Government. Wear *tsha ru* inside and '*phrug* outside, and put on all of your ornaments." Then the oldest son went to meet the Tibetan Government. After a brief discussion, they quickly began fighting, but with only ten soldiers the oldest son could not defeat the Lha sa army. He called to his father from a distance, "Escape! Burn the house!" Then Mgon po rnam rgyal and his son escaped on horseback. While crossing a river, both Mgon po rnam rgyal and his son fell from their horses and drowned. The Tibetan Government then killed all of Mgon po rnam rgyal's soldiers and occupied Nyag rong.

## 7. Stopping Crows<sup>28</sup>

Two families were assigned the task of stopping crows flying above Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace. These families shot any crow that came near Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace.

---

<sup>25</sup> Locals believe that prostrating to a person diminishes their *bsod nams* 'luck'.

<sup>26</sup> A type of fine woolen cloth.

<sup>27</sup> Clothing made from lambskin.

<sup>28</sup> O rgan dbang phyug.

## 8. Telling Mgon po rnam rgyal to Eat Shit<sup>29</sup>

Two men bet on who was brave enough to say, "Eat shit," to Mgon po rnam rgyal. The first man said that he was brave enough.

The second man then promised to give him his horse, gun, and knife if he did. Then, they very politely entered Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace and went to see Mgon po rnam rgyal.

The first man said very quickly, "A mgon<sup>30</sup> *lags, lca pa za*."<sup>31</sup>

Mgon po rnam rgyal asked, "What did you say?"

The man was very politely said, "Lcags po<sup>32</sup> *ri la skor ba 'gro na dga' mkhan red na*?"<sup>33</sup>

Mgon po rnam rgyal replied, "Of course! It's very good to circumambulate Lca po Mountain."

Thus the first man successfully tricked Mgon po rnam rgyal and thus won his friend's knife, horse, and gun.

## 9. Mgon po rnam rgyal Rewards Flatterers<sup>34</sup>

Mgon po rnam rgyal liked and rewarded people who flattered him. One day, he announced that any man whose horse had a tail was required to join a horse race.<sup>35</sup> There was a very skilled horse rider in upper Nyag rong who did not want to participate in the horse race, so he cut off his horse's tail. Mgon po rnam rgyal then sent a soldier to bring this man to his palace for punishment.

When he came to the palace, Mgon po rnam rgyal angrily demanded, "Why didn't you come to the horse race?"

The man replied, "You said that every man whose horse has a tail should come, but my horse doesn't have a tail. I also had no good

---

<sup>29</sup> O rgan dbang phyug.

<sup>30</sup> A mgon is a short, respectful term of address for Mgon po rnam rgyal.

<sup>31</sup> "Dear A mgon, eat shit."

<sup>32</sup> A sacred mountain in Tibet.

<sup>33</sup> "Is it good to circumambulate Lcags po Mountain?" sounds very similar to, "Dear A mgon, eat shit," in Tibetan.

<sup>34</sup> Tshe dbang.

<sup>35</sup> "Every man whose horse has a tail" is a standard, metaphorical way of saying "everyone."

clothes to wear. You are a great man and I didn't want your reputation to suffer, so I stayed at home."

This flattery delighted Mgon po rnam rgyal, who then rewarded the man with a new horse and fine clothes.

10. Mgon po rnam rgyal Drinks *Chu drung*<sup>36</sup>

Mgon po rnam rgyal and his *blon po* 'ministers' went to fight in Li thang.<sup>37</sup> The journey home was very long, and Mgon po rnam rgyal got very hungry. He drank a bowl of *chu drung*<sup>38</sup> in 'Dri ma chu thung,<sup>39</sup> and found it to be very delicious. When he arrived at his palace, he drank *chu drung* again, but found it less tasty than what he had drunk on his return home. He thought it must be the water, and then sent one of his chancellors back to 'Dri ma chu thung to fetch water. When he drank *chu drung* with water from 'Dri ma chu thung, it was still not as tasty as before, and he became angry. He didn't realize that what had made the *chu drung* tasty was his hunger on that long trip.

11. Mgon po rnam rgyal Barks Like a Dog<sup>40</sup>

Two men were arguing. The first man said he could make Mgon po rnam rgyal bark like a dog, while other man thought it was so impossible that he said, "If you can do that, I'll give you all my money." They then went to Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace.

The first man said, "A mgon, there is a very wonderful dog for sale."

Mgon po rnam rgyal asked, "Tell me about this dog."

---

<sup>36</sup> Tshe dbang.

<sup>37</sup> Li thang is one of the eighteen counties of Dkra mdzes Prefecture.

<sup>38</sup> It is a simple meal consisting of a little *rtsam pa* in cold water. It is usually drunk when people have no cooking implements.

<sup>39</sup> This is a place name. It is part of Bang smad Township and located twenty miles southeast of Bang smad Village.

<sup>40</sup> Tshe dbang.

The man then began making very strange noises.

Mgon po rnam rgyal immediately came down from his throne, got on all fours, and said, "A good dog doesn't bark like that. It barks like this – Woof! Woof! "

Thus the first man made Mgon po rnam rgyal bark like a dog and won the bet.

## 12. Mgon po rnam rgyal Dislikes Blindness<sup>41</sup>

Mgon po rnam rgyal was blind in one eye, and as a result disliked any reference to blindness. One day he was relaxing atop his palace, and saw a man with a very nice horse in the distance heading towards him. He then ordered a soldier to steal the horse.

The soldier went out but, when he approached the rider, he found that he was one of his friends. Unable to rob his own friend, he let the man go and returned to Mgon po rnam rgyal.

Mgon po rnam rgyal asked, "Why didn't you bring that horse here to me?"

The man covered one of his eyes with his hand, meaning that horse was blind in one eye.

Mgon po rnam rgyal quickly replied, "OK, let's not talk about it."

## 13. A Horse With No Tail<sup>42</sup>

Mgon po rnam rgyal announced that any man whose horse had a tail must join his army. However, there was one man whose horse had no tail. Mgon po rnam rgyal sent a soldier to fetch that man. When the man reached Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace, Mgon po rnam rgyal asked, "Why didn't you come join my army?"

The man said, "You announced that only men whose horses have tails need to come, but my horse has no tail. I worried that if I

---

<sup>41</sup> Tshe dbang.

<sup>42</sup> Tshe dbang.



brought such a horse, it would hurt your reputation, so I didn't come. You can check my horse if you like."

Mgon po rnam rgyal said, "No! We don't need to check." Thus the man was not punished and was not forced to join the army.

REFERENCES

- Aguillar, Oriol. 2005. Los linajes de transmisión de Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul. *Revue d'Etudes Tibetaines* 8:65-83.
- Bkra shis bzang po (G Roche, C Stuart, T Thurston, and E McKinlay, eds). 2012. May All Good Things Gather Here: Life, Religion, and Marriage in a Mi nyag Tibetan Village. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 14.
- <http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/browse?type=author&value=Bkra+shis+bzang+po>, accessed 9 August 2012
- <http://www.oralliterature.org/collections/bkrashisoo1.html>, accessed 9 August 2012
- [http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Nyala\\_Pema\\_Duddul](http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Nyala_Pema_Duddul), accessed 15 Dec 2011
- Yudru Tsomo. 2006. *Local Aspirations and National Constraints: A Case Study of Nyarong Gonpo Namgyel and His Rise to Power in Kham (1836-1865)*. PhD dissertation, Harvard University.
- Tashi Tsering. 1985. Nyag rong Mgon po rnam rgyal: a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Khams pa Warrior in B Aziz and Matthew Kapstein (eds) *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization*. New Delhi: Manohar, 196-214.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 1. G.yung drung spun dgu is east of Bang smad Village.

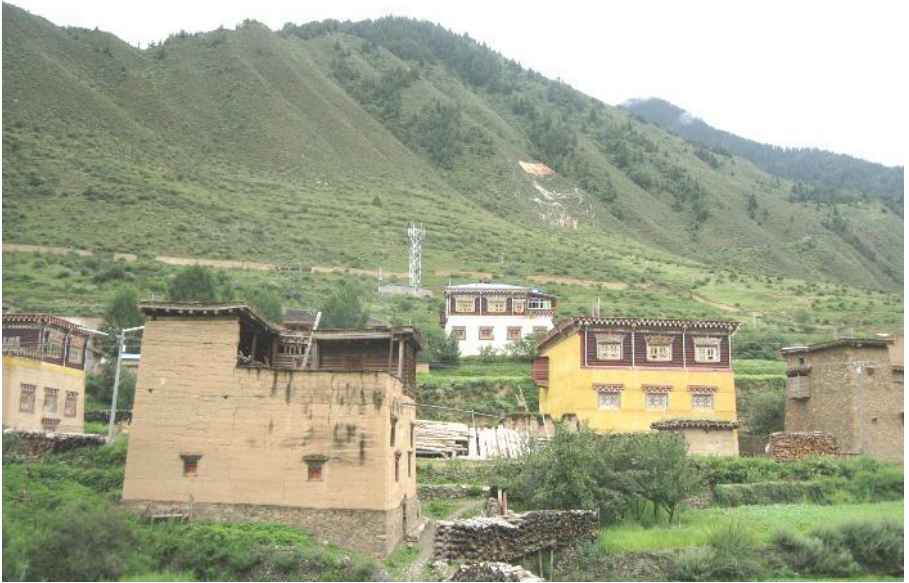


Figure 2. A ku me is in the west of Bang smad Village. Stone rooms full of *ma Ni* stones were once here. Nowadays, *ma Ni* stones are only visible around the shrubs in the center of the picture.





Figures 3 and 4. Lhu rdzung da bi is in Bang smad Valley.



Figure 5. Villagers make offerings to *klu* and ask for rain at a small stream among these trees.



Figure 6. Shang lang brag dkar Mountain: Mgon po rnam rgyal asked Nyag bla pad ma 'bdud 'dul to climb this mountain in order to demonstrate his power.





Figure 7. This house was for the Khwa srung family who fired rifles to stop crows flying above Mgon po rnam rgyal's palace.



NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'dri ma chu thung འདྲི་མ་ཚུ་ཐུང་།  
'phrug འཕྲུག་

A

a ku me ཨུ་ཀུ་མེ།  
a ku me du tri su nag po zhi zhi mal mal swa ha ཨུ་ཀུ་མེ་དུ་ཏི་སུ་ནག་པོ་ཞི་ཞི་མཐཐ་མཐཐ་  
མཐཐ་སྐྱ་ཏ།  
a lca ཨུ་ལ།  
a mgon ཨུ་མགོན།  
a mgon lags, lca pa za ཨུ་མགོན་ལགས་, 'ལུ་པ་ཟ།  
a mkhyogs lu'i ཨུ་མཁྱེགས་ལུ་འི།  
a myes chos grags ཨུ་མྱེས་ཆོས་གྲགས།

B

bang smad བང་སྐད།  
bdud བདུད།  
be lo བེ་ལོ།  
bkra shis bzang po བརྒྱ་ཤིས་བཟང་པོ།  
bla ma བླ་མ།  
bon བོན།  
bsang བསང་།  
bsod nams བསོད་ནམས།  
btsan བཅེན།  
btsan lam བཅེན་ལམ།  
btsan mchod བཅེན་མཆོད།  
btsan mda' བཅེན་མདའ།  
btsan rta dmar po བཅེན་རྟ་དམར་པོ།

C

chab mdo ཆབ་མདོ།  
chu drung ཚུ་བྲུང་།

D

dar ri sbyin pa rgyal mthsan དར་རི་སྤྱིན་པ་རྒྱལ་མཆོན།  
dbal bzang དབལ་བཟང་།  
dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།

G



g.yar ri seng ge གཡར་རི་སེང་གེ  
 g.yung drung spun dgu གཡུང་རླུང་སྤུང་དགུ  
 gyon 'gyon གྱོན་འགྱོན།  
 gzun 'bam གཞུན་འབམ།

K

kha ba lung ring ཁ་བ་ལུང་རིང་།  
 khang tshig ཁང་ཆིག་  
 khwa srung ཁ་སྤུང་།

L

lca pa ལ་པ།  
 lcags po ri la skor ba 'gro na dga' mkhan red na ལཱ་གས་པོ་རི་ལ་སྐོར་བ་འགོ་ན་  
 དགའ་མཁན་རེད་ན།  
 lha sa ལྷ་ས།  
 lhu rdzung da bi ལྷ་རླུང་དཔེ།  
 li thang ལེ་ཐང་།

M

ma Ni མ་ཌི།  
 mgon po rnam rgyal མགོན་པོ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།  
 mgon po tshe brtan མགོན་པོ་ཆེ་བརྟན།  
 mi nyag མི་ཉག་  
 mtsho kha མཚོ་ཁ།

N

nor bu bzang po རོར་བུ་བཟང་པོ།  
 nor bu tshe ring རོར་བུ་ཆེ་རིང་།  
 nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul ཉག་བླ་པད་མ་བདུད་འདུལ།  
 nyag chu ཉག་ཅུ།  
 nyag rong ཉག་རོང་།  
 nyag skad ཉག་སྐད།  
 nyag stod ཉག་སྟོད།

P

pha rda པ་ར།  
 pur pa'i པུར་པའི།

R

rdo ring རོ་རིང་།  
 rdo rje rgyal mtshan རོ་རྗེ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།  
 rdzogs chen rin po che རྫོགས་ཆེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

ri nan dpal mgon རི་ནན་དཔལ་མགོན།  
ri sne རི་སྒེ།  
rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།

S

shang lang ཤང་ལང་།  
shang lang brag dkar ཤང་ལང་བྲག་དཀར།  
Sichuan 四川 (si khron སི་ཁྲོན།)  
sman btsun le'u sman སྐན་བཙུན་ལེ་འུ་སྐན།  
spang ri སྤང་རི།

T

tsha ru ཨ་རུ།  
tshe dbang ཨ་དབང་།  
tshwa tshwa ཨྲྀ་ཨྲྀ།

Y

yi dwags ཡི་དྲགས།